

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 2978

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PINT PO

SUBJ: SOARES VIEWS ON PALMA CARLOS PROPOSALS

SUMMARY: FONMIN THINKS CURRENT CRISIS ARTIFICIALLY AND WRONGLY BROUGHT ON BY PALMA CARLOS. NO REALLY SERIOUS ISSUES DIVIDED PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT AND IMPAIRED ITS ABILITY TO GOVERN AND ALL OF CARLOS' PROPOSED REMEDIES WERE WORSE THAN ALLEGED DISEASE. END SUMMARY.

1. MARIO SOARES AND SALGADO ZENHA DINED AT RESIDENCE THURSDAY JULY 11, A FEW HOURS AFTER HAVING RESIGNED AS MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF JUSTICE AT REQUEST OF PRESIDENT. ZENHA CHEERFUL BUT SILENT, SOARES TALKATIVE AND FRANK.

2. ALL I HAD TO ASK SOARES WAS HIS OPINION OF RECENT EVENTS. IN STATING IT, HE SAID HE HAD GIVEN SAME OPINION TO PRESIDENT PRIVATELY AND TO COUNCIL OF MINISTERS IN MEETING CHAIRED BY PALMA CARLOS. IT ALSO ACCORDS WITH SOARES' INTERVIEW IN DIARIO DE NOTICIAS SAME DAY. BURDEN WAS THAT CRISIS ARTIFICIALLY AND UNNECESSARILY CREATED BY PALMA CARLOS (FOR WHOM
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HE HAS PERSONAL HIGH REGARD) AND THAT CARLOS' PROPOSALS WERE DISASTROUS.

3. MAIN POINT ON WHICH CARLOS RESIGNED WAS HIS PROPOSAL THAT PROMPT ELECTION FOR PRESIDENT BE HELD TO "LEGITIMIZE" POSITION OF SPINOLA. THIS (PLUS SECOND PROPOSAL BELOW) NOT ONLY WOULD HAVE UPSET TIMETABLE SET BY ARMED FORCES MOVEMENT, BUT COULD DO NOTHING BUT HARM. (A) NO ONE IS QUESTIONING SPINOLA'S LEGITIMACY; (B) IF NO ONE RAN AGAINST SPINOLA ELECTION WOULD BE REGARDED AS A FARCE, LIKE THOSE OF THOMAZ; AND (C) IF GENUINE OPPOSITION CANDIDATES RAN, THIS WOULD SIMPLY UPSET "COLLEGIALITY" OF PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT, DIVIDE COUNTRY ALONG PARTY LINES, AND DO NO ONE ANY GOOD.

4. SECOND CARLOS PROPOSAL WAS DEFERRAL OF GENERAL ELECTIONS FROM 1975 TO 1976. COUPLED WITH FIRST PROPOSAL THIS NOT ONLY WOULD HAVE UPSET AGREED TIMETABLE BUT WOULD HAVE LED TO SUSPICION OF JUST ANOTHER MILITARY JUPOA ALWAYS TALKING ABOUT DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS BUT NEVER GETTING TO THEM. FURTHERMORE, IT IS INCONSISTENT TO INSIST ON QUICK "LEGITIMACY" FOR PRESIDENT AND PROTRACTED DELAY IN "LEGITIMACY" FOR ASSEMBLY.

5. THIRD PROPOSAL WAS TO GIVE PRIME MINISTER GREATER POWERS, INCLUDING POWER TO LEGISLATE WITHOUT CONSENT OF COUNCIL OF MINISTERS. SOARES UNDERSTAND FRUSTRATIONS OF TRYING TO RUN A COUNTRY BY CONSENSUS IN A GOVERNMENT OF COMMUNISTS, SOCIALISTS AND CENTRISTS, BUT FEELS THAT NO ISSUES IN DISPUTE WERE SO IMPORTANT AS TO WARRANT BREAKING UP GOVERNMENT. IN FACT, THINGS WERE GOING PRETTY WELL. IN PARTICULAR, AFRICAN NEGOTIATIONS GOING VERY WELL AND BREAKUP OF GOVERNMENT MAY MAKE THEM MUCH MORE DIFFICULT. FINALLY, GRANT OF POWER REQUESTED BY CARLOS WOULD IN VIEW OF PORTUGUESE AND THE WORLD HAVE REPRESENTED REVERSION TO CAETANO-TYPE CABINET WHERE ALL DECISIONS WERE MADE BY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTERS' ROLE LIMITED TO CARRYING THEM OUT.

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6. AS TO RESIGNATION OF REMAINDER OF CABINET THAT AFTERNOON, INCLUDING HIMSELF, SOARES MERELY SAID THAT ONLY PROPOSAL OF CARLOS WHICH WAS APPROVED WAS THAT MINISTERS SHOULD BE APPOINTED BY PRIME MINISTER (SUBJECT TO PRESIDENTIAL APPROVAL/VETO) RATHER THAN BY PRESIDENT. RESIGNATIONS WERE TO CLEAR THE DECK FOR NEW PRIME MINISTER.

7. COMMENT: IN SPITE OF RAPID MARCH OF EVENTS,

THESE VIEWS SEEM WORTH RECORDING. SOARES SAID
NOTHING OF HIS OWN FUTURE, BUT ALL EXPECTATIONS ARE
THAT HE AND CUNHAL WILL BE IN NEW CABINET. END COMMENT.
SCOTT

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